

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 00990 01 OF 02 310848Z

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 EUR-12 IO-11 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

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INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY SANA

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 990

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, PINT, LE, SY

SUBJECT: DESTROYING LEBANON IN ORDER TO SAVE IT: A PRELIMINARY

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PAGE 02 BEIRUT 00990 01 OF 02 310848Z

ASSESSMENT OF THE SYRIAN INTERVENTION

SUMMARY: THE SYRIAN-ARRANGED SETTLEMENT SEEMS TO BE CATCHING ON, BUT ITS CONTINUED FRAGILITY IS APPARENT. POLITICAL ASPECT OF SETTLEMENT, WHILE NOT YET FULLY WORKED OUT, HAS BEEN GENERALLY ACCEPTED IN BROAD OUTLINE. SEVERAL IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS WHICH COULD SCOTCH PROGRESS ACHIEVED AT VIRTUALLY ANY MOMENT ARE: (A) GETTING THE CHRISTIANS FULLY ON BOARD; (B) CONTROLLING THE HOTHEADS ON BOTH SIDES; (C) COPING WITH RESENTMENT OF SYRIAN "INVASION." THESE PROBLEMS HIGHLIGHT NEED FOR FAST MOVEMENT IN SECURING CEASEFIRE/POLITICAL SETTLEMENT. BEYOND THESE DIFFICULTIES ARE OTHER PROBLEMS OF MORE PERMANENT CONSEQUENCES: (A) RESTORING AUTHORITY OF LEBANESE STATE, SECURITY FORCES, AND ARMY ; (B) SECURING COMPLIANCE OF PALESTINIANS; (C) BEING ASSURED THAT LEFTISTS WILL NOT TURN HOSTILE; (D) HANDLING CONTINUED EXISTENCE OF ARMED MILITIAS. PRESSURE ON SYRIA TO SHORTEN ITS "OCCUPATION" WILL BE OFFSET BY NECESSITY FOR SYRIAN PRESENCE TO STAY AS LONG AS GOL'S AUTHORITY REMAINS SHATTERED. END SUMMARY.

1. THE SIGHT OF CARS AND PEDESTRIANS GOING UNCONCERNEDLY DOWN STREETS TERRORIZED ONLY DAYS BEFORE BY SNIPER FIRE IS ONE OF THE MULTIPLYING SIGNS THAT THE SYRIAN-ARRANGED SETTLEMENT MAY BE CATCHING ON. THE TENSION THAT PERVADED THIS CITY SLIGHTLY OVER A WEEK AGO IS BEING RELEASED, AND THAT IN ITSELF IS HALF THE BATTLE IN MAKING THE CEASEFIRE STICK.

2. THREE BASIC MILITARY AND POLITICAL ELEMENTS HAVE CHANGED. FIRST, THERE HAS BEEN A DEMONSTRABLE SHIFT IN THE BALANCE OF POWER, PARTICULARLY OUTSIDE OF BEIRUT, THROUGH THE INTRODUCTION OF AN UNDISPUTABLY SUPERIOR MILITARY POWER. SECOND, THE FACT THAT WESTERN INTERVENTION DID NOT OCCUR WHEN THE CRUNCH CAME IS MAKING CHRISTIAN ELEMENTS RECONSIDER THEIR BASIC STRATEGY OF PROVOKING OUTSIDE INTERVENTION. THIRD, THE LEBANESE ARMY PERFORMED POORLY WHEN IT ENTERED INTO DIRECT CONFLICT WITH MOSLEM AND PALESTINIAN FORCES, UNDERMINING THE CHRISTIAN SHIBBOLETH OF ULTIMATE RECOURSE TO THE ARMY.

3. YET THE FRAGILITY OF THE CEASEFIRE IS DEMONSTRATED BY THE  
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BEIRUT 00990 01 OF 02 310848Z

QUICK RETURN OF TENSION ACCOMPANYING EVERY BURST OF GUNFIRE. NOBODY CAN BE CERTAIN THAT THE SYRIAN MAGIC WILL WORK THIS TIME EITHER. ALTHOUGH THE SYRIANS HAVE INJECTED A NEW POLICE ARM THROUGH THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ARMY, AND SYRIAN OFFICERS ARE DIRECTLY COMMITTED IN THE CEASEFIRE'S ENFORCEMENT, NEVERTHELESS ENFORCEMENT HAS BEEN CONCEDED PARTLY TO CHRISTIAN MILITIAS IN CERTAIN AREAS. NO DISARMING OF THE MAJOR ARMED ELEMENTS IS IN THE CARDS.

SO THE INGREDIENTS OF ARMED CONFLICT ARE STILL THERE.

I. THE BASIS OF THE SETTLEMENT:

4. AS SOON AS IT BECAME CLEAR THAT THE LEBANESE LACKED THE POLITICAL WILL TO SOLVE THE CRISIS THEMSELVES, THE ONLY REMAINING QUESTION WAS WHICH OUTSIDE POWER SHOULD BE THE CATALYST. IT WAS EVIDENT THAT THE SYRIANS WOULD NOT TOLERATE ANY ARAB INTERVENTION BUT THEIR OWN, OR AT LEAST ONE GIVING THEM THE UPPER HAND, AND THEY WERE IN A POSITION TO BLOCK WHAT THEY DID NOT LIKE. MAJOR POWERS AND UNITED NATIONS COULD NOT SEE UTILITY IN STICKING A HAND IN LEBANESE BUZZ SAW; THE ONE THAT TRIED IT; I.E. FRANCE THROUGH COUVE DE MURVILLE, FOUND ITS EFFORTS LARGELY UNREWARDED. THERE WAS NO CHOICE BUT TO GO ALONG WITH SYRIA, AND IT IS TO CREDIT OF OTHER ARAB AND INTERNATIONAL POWERS THAT, SO FAR AT LEAST, THEY HAVE NOT UNDERMINED SYRIAN INITIATIVE.

5. SUBSTANCE OF POLITICAL SETTLEMENT NOT YET FURDND#  
OUT. BUT MAIN LINES APPARENTLY ALREADY AGREED GIVE SOMETHING TO EVERYBODY, AND THAT SHOULD HELP PROMOTE ACCEPTANCE IF REASON OVERCOME FANATICISM. THE MOSLEMS GET THEIR BASIC DEMAND OF EQUAL REPRESENTATION IN PALIAMENT AND MORE POWER FOR THE PRIME MINISTER. THE CHRISTIANS GET SOME OF THE "GUARANTEES" THEY HAVE DEMANDED, SINCE PRESIDENT OF REPUBLIC WILL ALWAYS BE MARONITE AND SPECIAL PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITIES APPARENTLY WILL BE NEEDED FOR AT LEAST SOME POLICICALLY SENSITIVE VOTES. THE LEFTISTS GET VERY LITTLE OF THEIR PROGRAM, BUT THEY CAN POINT TO PROSPOECTS OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL REFORM AND SOME SMALL EFFORT AT DECONFESSIONALIZING THE CIVIL SERVICE. LEFTISTS MUST HAVE BEEN LANED ON HEAVILY BY SYRIANS TO ACCEPT THIS RATYER MINIMAL ENDORSEMENT OF THEIR PET PROJECTS, BUT THEY DO  
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 04 BEIRUT 00990 01 OF 02 310848Z

NOT COME OUT EMPTY-HANDED.

II. IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS

6. THE CEASEFIRE/POLITICAL PACKAGE NOW BEING PUT IN FINAL FORM IS NOT YET BEYOND DANGER POINT. SEVERAL PROBLEMS REMAIN THAT COULD SCOTCH THE PROGRESS ACHIEVED AT VIRTUALLY ANY MOMENT. IN DESCENDING ORDER OF IMMEDIACY, THESE ARE:

(A) GETTING THE CHRISTIANS ON BOARD: FRANGIE ACCEPTED THE TEN-POINT POLITICAL SETTLEMENT ON BASIS OF NEGOTIATING MANDATE HE HAD RECEIVED FROM CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP. HE LEFT SOME DETAILS UNRESOLVED, AND BOTH HE AND OTHER CHRISTIAN LEADERS ARE STILL BARGAINING ON THESE, SYAING THEY WANT TO SEE PROGRESS IN CEASEFIRE FIRST. THIS MAY

JUST BE A WAY TO COVER THEIR HUMILIATION IN HAVING REVERSED THEMSELVES BY AGREEING FOR ALL PRATICAL PURPOSES TO REFORM PROGRAM BEFORE CEASEFIRE. YET IT SHOWS INSISTENCE OF CHRISTIANS ON AS MANY "GUARANTEES" AS POSSIBLE, NOT TO MENTION THEIR GENERAL UNHAPPINESS AT PREDICAMENT IN WHICH THEY FIND THEMSELVES.

(B) CONTROLLING THE HOTHEADS ON BOTH SIDES: A LARGE ELEMENT OF HESITATION OF CHRISTIAN LEADERS IS KNOWLEDGE THAT PORTIONS OF THEIR CONSTITUENCY HAVE BECOME MORE RATHER THAN LESS FANATICAL IN RECENT MONTHS. IT IS MAJOR UNDERTAKING FOR THEM TO CONVINCE HARD-LINERS THAT SETTLEMENT IS A GOOD ONE AND FIGHT WAS NOT IN VAIN. ON MOSLEM/LEFTISTS/PALESTINIAN SIDE, THE READINESS OF EXTREMISTS TO EXPLOIT ANY OPENING FOR RENEWAL OF FIGHTING IS WELL KNOWN.

(C) RESENTMENT OF SYRIAN "INVASION:" PARTICULARLY CHRISTIANS, BUT ALSO MOSLEMS TO A GROWING EXTENT, ARE GRUMBLING ABOUT SYRIAN HEAVY HAND IN LEBANESE AFFAIRS. SYRIAN INTENTIONS ARE WIDELY SUSPECT. THIS ILL WILL IS NOT YET OF MAJOR PROPORTIONS, FOR MANY LEBANESE TACITLY REALIZE INTERVENTION OF SOME KIND WAS NEEDED TO GET OUT OF LAST WEEK'S CHAOS. MOREOVER, SYRIANS SO FAR HAVE PROVED DIPLOMATS IN SENSITIVE ROLE. BUT RELIEF AT CEASE-FIRE WILL BE OVERTAKEN BY SPREADING RESENTMENT IF SYRIANS DO NOT START WITHDRAWING SOON. AN UGLY INCIDENT INVOLVING SYRIAN OFFICER COULD SPARK FLARE-UP AT ANY TIME.

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PAGE 05 BEIRUT 00990 01 OF 02 310848Z

NOTE BY OC/T: BEIRUT 990(0)AS RECEIVED.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 00990 02 OF 02 310844Z

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ACTION NEA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8428  
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BEIRUT 990

7. ABOVE PROBLEMS HIGHLIGHT NECESSITY FOR FAST MOVEMENT  
IN SECURING CEASEFIRE/POLITICAL SETTLEMENT. WHILE CAUTIOUS  
BUT FIRM PACE HAS PAID OFF IN APPLICATION OF CEASEFIRE, EVERY  
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BEIRUT 00990 02 OF 02 310844Z

DAY'S DELAY IN ANNOUNCING POLITICAL AGREEMENT ENCOURAGES  
BELIEF AMONG CHRISTIAN HARD-LINERS THAT EVEN AT THIS LATE DATE  
THEY CAN HOLD OUT FOR BETTER TERMS, AND PERHAPS EVEN RENEW  
THE ARMED STRUGGLE. THE FACT THAT THIS WOULD BE SUICIDAL FOR  
THEM AND MAKE THE CRISIS WORSE THAN EVER FOR EVERYBODY  
WOULD NOT NECESSARILY DETER THEM. THERE IS STILL LINGERING  
HOPE AMONG CHRISTIANS THAT THEY CAN "INTERNATIONALIZE" THE  
CRISIS SOMEHOW--IN FACT, THEY SUSPECT THAT THE WORSE THE  
CRISIS GETS, THE MORE "INTERNATIONAL" IT NECESSARILLY BECOMES.  
ALL THIS WOULD BE AGGRAVATED IF SYRIAN "OCCUPATION" WERE  
SLOW IN ENDING. SYRIA'S ARAB RIVALS, ESPECIALLY IRAQ,  
WOULD THEN PROBABLY STEP UP PRPPAGANDA CAMPAIGN, IF NOT  
WORSE, AGAINST DAMASCUS.

III. LONGER-TERM PROBLEMS:

8. IF ABOVE IMMEDIATE DIFFICULTIES CAN BE OVERCOME, THERE STILL WILL REMAIN SEVERAL KNOTTY PROBLEMS OF MORE PERMANENT CONSEQUENCE.

(A) RESTORING AUTHORITY OF LEBANESE STATE: THIS ISSUE WILL BE SOURCE OF CONTROVERSY FOR SEVERAL YEARS. RESTORATION OF DISCREDITED MILITARY AND SECURITY FORCES IS MOSTPRESSING ASPECTS, SO THAT GOL CAN ARREST LAW BREAKERS AND GENERALLY MAINTAIN CIVIL PEACE. THIS WILL REQUIRE CONSUMMATE SKILL IIN POLITICIANS, AN EVEN HAND BY MILITARY AND SECURITY FORCES, AND A CONSTANT EYE ON PALESTINIAN FEARS ABOUT ARMY INTERVENTION VIS-A-VIS THE FEDAYEEN. BEEFING UP OF PERSONNEL AND EQUIPMENT OF MILITARY AND SECURITY ARMS ON CAREFULLY PLANNED BASIS WILL BE REQUIRED. BOTH INTERNAL SECURITY FORCES AND ARMY HAVE BEEN VERY SERIOUSLY BATTERED BY DESERTIONS AND EQUIPMENT LOSSES. THE MORALE OF BOTH IS SHOT.

(B) COMPLIANCE BY PALESTINIANS: WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE PROJECTED AGREEMENT WILL AFFIRM RESTRICTIONS ON PALESTINIAN BEHAVIOR, SUCH AS LIMITATIONS ON ARMS IN DBAYE AND TEL ZAATAR CAMPS. AN EFFORT WILL BE MADE TO RESTORE BASIS OF CAIRO AND MELKART AGREEMENTS--NO SMALL UNDERTAKING GIVEN EVENTS SINCE THEN. THERE IS SERIOUS QUESION WHETHER PALESTINIANS, ESPECAILLY THE REJECTIONISTS, WOULD COMPLY WITH SUCH RULES. NN-COMPLIANCE, OR EVEN STRONG SUSPICION ON PART OF KATAEB OF NON-COMPLIANCE, WOULD RAISE RISK OF RENEWAL OF FIGHTING.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BEIRUT 00990 02 OF 02 310844Z

(C) LEFTIST ATTITUDE: THE FACT THAT THE LEBANESE LEFTISTS ARE GETTING VERY LITTLE FROM THE POLITICAL AGREEMENT IS BECOMING WELL KNOWN. WHILE THIS HELPS TO SELL THE SETTLEMENT IN THE CHRISTIAN AREAS, IT INCREASES JUMBLATT'S PROBLEM WITHIN THE LEFTIST CAMP. HE LED THE LEFT INTO ACCEPTANCE OF THE TERMS AND IS THEREFORE VULNERABLE. GIVEN HIS VOLATILE POLITICAL NATURE, HE COULD EASILY SEE FIT TO STIR UP TROUBLE AT SOME FUTURE POINT. LEFTIST AGITATION FOR MORE CONCESSIONS COULD ARISE. THE PROJECTED EXPANSION OF THE CABINET COULD BE THE OCCASION FOR A JUMBLATT MOVE AGAINST THE SETTLEMENT.

(D) CONTINUED EXISTENCE OF ARMED MILITIAS: THERE IS VIRTUALLY NO PROSPECT OF DISARMING THE VARIOUS PRIVATE MILITIAS OVER THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE, LET ALONE THE LARGE PALESTINIAN ARSENALS. THIS WILL PRESERVE THE FLAMMABLE QUALITY OF LEBANESE POLITICS FOR AN INDEFINITE PERIOD. THE DANGER OF IGNITION WILL BE CONSTANT.

9. COPING WITH THESE LONG-TERM PROBLEMS WILL NOT BE EASY. EVENTUAL STRENGTHENING OF ARMY THROUGH IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECENTLY PASSED CONSCRIPTION LAW IS A MUST. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC REFORMS, UNDERTAKEN SERIOUSLY, MIGHT HELP DEFUSE THE EXPECTED LEFTIST ATTACK; BUT THE SERIOUSNESS WITH WHICH BOTH CHRISTIAN AND MOSLEM LEADERS WILL APPROACH THIS

MATTER IS OPEN TO QUESTION. AS FOR EFFORTS THAT MIGHT BE UNDERTAKEN BY OUTSIDE POWERS, INCLUDING U.S., FOUR MAJOR ONES OCCUR TO US: (A) HUMANITARIAN RELIEF AND RECONSTRUCTION AID MIGHT BE OFFERED. (B) AT SOME LATER TIME, MATERIAL AID TO THE MILITARY AND INTERNAL SECURITY FORCES MIGHT BE FEASIBLE; THIS COULD HELP RESTORE THE VIABILITY OF THE CIVIL AUTHORITY, THROUGH PALESTINIAN APPREHENSIONS ON THIS SCORE WILL BE A MAJOR COMPLICATION. (C) CONTINUED EFFORTS MULTILATERALLY TO RESTRICT THE FLOW OF MUNITIONS TO THE MILITIAS SHOULD BE CONTINUED, TO REDUCE THE TINDERBOX QUALITY OF THE LEBANESE SCENE. (D) THE U.S. MIGHT USE ITS DIPLOMATIC INFLUENCE WITH ISRAEL AND EGYPT TO DAMPEN THE ADVERSE REACTIONS WHICH THESE GOVERNMENTS UNDOUBTEDLY HARBOR ABOUT SYRIA'S PRESENT HEGEMONY IN LEBANON; WE MIGHT ALSO SUGGEST TO FRANCE AND IRAN THAT THEY TRY THE SAME WITH IRAQ. BEYOND THAT, GENERAL ENCOURAGEMENT OF MODERATION BY ALL LEBANESE PARTIES AND OF CONTINUED CONSTRUCTIVE ATTITUDE BY SYRIANS IS ABOUT ALL THAT U.S. CAN USEFULLY UNDERTAKE.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 04 BEIRUT 00990 02 OF 02 310844Z

10. THE PROCESS OF REBUILDING A STABLE LEBANON, WHICH IT HAS BEEN NECESSARY TO "DESTROY IN ORDER TO SAVE," WILL BE A FRUSTRATING AND LENGTHY TASK. THE FORESEEABLE POLITICAL PRESSURE ON SYRIA TO SHORTEN ITS "OCCUPATION" WILL BE OFFSET BY THE NECESSITY FOR SYRIAN PRESENCE TO STAY AS LONG AS THE GOL'S AUTHORITY REMAINS SHATTERED. HOW DAMASCUS PLAYS THESE CONFLICTING INTERESTS WILL TELL MUCH OF THE STORY.

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